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## The Language of Appointment to Offices and Roles in Scripture

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## Chapter 4: The Language of Appointment to Offices and Roles in Scripture

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Clearly people are appointed to specific offices and roles in Scripture. However, the question remains, do the ceremonies involved in such an appointment ever constitute ordination in a way that corresponds to modern ordination to ministry, or is something else happening?

The King James Version uses the verb “to ordain” with reference to the appointment of priests to the service of idols (2 Kings 23:5; 2 Chron. 11:15) and to the appointment of the high priest to the service of God (Heb. 5:1; 8:3). It also uses “to ordain” with reference to the appointment of Jeremiah as a prophet (Jer. 1:5); to the appointment of the Twelve (Mk 3:14–15; Acts 1:21–22); to Paul’s appointment as a preacher, apostle, and teacher (1 Tim. 1:27); and to Titus’s appointment of elders in every city (Titus 1:5). On the surface these facts may seem sufficient to settle the debate. However, it is no secret that King James was insistent the version he authorized retain traditional ecclesiastical titles (e.g., in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 2:25. Cf. Acts 1:20). Even if we could be sure that the translators intended to speak of ordination here in a technical sense, that fact would hardly settle the issue of what the Bible writers themselves intended.

The methodology adopted here has been to identify the verbs used in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) for the appointment of people to a whole gamut of human offices and roles, then to study the use of these words in the canon to clarify what the language actually implies.<sup>1</sup> The approach has been inductive and comprehensive. However, for the sake of the reader the whole study is not presented here, just the conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew and Aramaic word studies were based on *The Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* (London; Samuel Bagster and Sons, n.d.). The Greek word studies were based on W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, eds. *A Concordance to the Greek Testament according to the Texts of Westcott and Hort, Tischendorf and the English Revisers*, 5th ed., H. K. Moulton rev. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978).

## Biblical Terminology for Installation into Office or Role

The study begins with terminology involving physical imagery that may indicate actual ceremonies connected with installation to office. It then moves on to the discussion of more general terminology.

### Terminology Tied in with Installation Ceremonies

In this section consideration is first given to the practice of the laying on of the hand(s), a ceremony accompanying installation into office in both the OT and NT, and then to the practice of anointing, a ceremony accompanying installation in the OT but not in the NT. Causing an appointee to stand is part of OT ceremonial installation on at least one occasion and may still have value today. It is unclear to what extent the filling of the hand of OT priests was a live or a dead metaphor but it does have potential as a part of Christian installation ceremony today. It is unclear whether appointment by the stretching forth of the hand in either Testament was a dead metaphor or a literal practice in appointment ceremonies. However, it likewise has potential as a part of Christian installation ceremony today.

#### *The Laying on of the Hand(s)*

Moses lays his hand on Joshua as a sign of the transfer of authority (Num. 27:18–20). In the NT the delegation of authority is evident in the laying on of the hand upon deacons and the laying on of the hand(s) upon elders (Acts 6:4–6; 1 Tim. 4:15; 5:22). This practice is an extension of the laying on of the hand upon new believers (Acts 8:17; Heb. 6:1). The use of laying on of the hand upon all believers challenges the idea that it can be limited to a particular group of believers. There is no distinction between commissioning and ordination here. Nor is there any delay between appointment to the task or office and the laying on of the hand. If a person is called to the work, the laying on of the hand(s) is appropriate. Blessing and privilege as well as authority are conveyed by the laying on of the hand as apparent in, for example, Jacob's blessing of Joseph and his two sons (Gen. 48:12–20).

Similarly, responsibility is being transferred when Moses lays his hand on Joshua and ceremonially appoints him as his successor (Num. 27:18). Moses is said to be giving a portion of his *hōd* or authority to Joshua so that the entire congregation of the children of Israel may hear or listen to him (cf. Deut. 34:9).<sup>2</sup>

So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and *lay your hand on him*. Have him stand before

2 Note how Yahweh himself likewise gives unparalleled *hōd* to Solomon (1 Chron. 29:25).

Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him" (Num. 27:18-20; emphasis added).<sup>3</sup>

The significance of the laying on of the hand for the transfer of authority becomes clearer as we examine the function of the laying on of the hand throughout the OT as a whole. The laying on of the hand can be an act of violent intrusion into the body space of another (e.g., Gen. 22:12; 37:22). It is done to sacrificial animals, apparently as a transfer of sin to the animal (e.g., Lev. 4:1-4). In a case of blasphemy, all who heard a man curse are commanded to lay hands on his head before the entire congregation stone him (Lev. 24:14). The words follow, "When one curses his God, (s)he will carry his own sin" (Lev. 24:15).<sup>4</sup> The idea appears to be that by coming forward as witnesses, the hearers have absolved themselves of any responsibility attached to the man's sin. Is the forced intimacy of the hand-laying a way of making potentially false accusers take stock? In any case, more precisely it is responsibility for sin that is here being transferred to the accused, rather than sin itself.

Delegation of responsibility and the granting of privilege come to the fore in Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, with the right hand on one and the left on the other (Gen. 48:12-20).

Delegation of authority is evident in the way the appointment of deacons is seen as freeing up the apostles for prayer and ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). Timothy's installation as an elder is in view when Paul instructs him not to neglect the gift given to him with the laying on of hands of the eldership (1 Tim. 4:15) and his installation of other elders would appear to be in view when Paul warns him against laying hands on anyone too quickly (1 Tim. 5:22). The apostles pray over the Church's first deacons and lay hands on them (Acts 6:6).

In the NT, elders and deacons are not the only object of the laying on of hands. In Acts 8:17 it is recorded that Peter and John lay hands on the Samaritan converts and these converts receive the Holy Spirit, suggesting part of a ceremony of dedication of new believers. In Hebrews 6:1, it is listed with the foundational matters of repentance, faith, baptism, resurrec-

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3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from this point on are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.®, as accessed through [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

4 This is a more literal rendering than the NIV's "Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible." Cross references: Exod. 22:8, Lev. 5:1.

tion, and eternal judgment, suggesting that it happened with all believers. The laying on of hands for elders and deacons would be an extension of this initial installation as Christians, and would consistently apply to instalment into and other offices and roles, as the need arises.

No mere symbolism is involved in the laying on of hands in Acts 8:17. Without divorcing the efficacy of the ceremony from the faith it expresses, a real transformation takes place; to the extent that Simon offers money so that he may also have the power to convey the Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:18–19).<sup>5</sup> Peter roundly rejects Simon's suggestion (verses 18–24).

### *Anointing the Appointee*

Priests, kings, prophets, and proclaimers of good news are anointed to their tasks in the OT. The titles "Messiah" and "Christ" refer to the anointing of Jesus. Anointing as a ceremony of installation is absent from the NT. The language of anointing stresses the initiative of divine grace.

The verb *mšck*, "to anoint," is frequently used of appointment to a particular office and roles. Priests are anointed,<sup>6</sup> as are kings,<sup>7</sup> prophets (1 Kings 19:16), and promulgators of good news (Isa. 61:1). The cognate noun, *māšīack* ("anointed one"), has come into English with reference to the ultimate Davidic king as "Messiah."

The Greek equivalent of *māšīack*, *Christos*, has likewise come into English with reference to Jesus as "Christ" and is cognate to *chriō* ("I anoint") and *chrisma* ("anointing"). Jesus applies *chriō* to himself when he speaks of the Spirit having anointed him to proclaim good news (Lk 4:16). It is God who has anointed Jesus (Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9) and who has anointed believers as well (2 Cor. 1:21). The anointing of the Holy One brings knowledge in 1 John 2:20, 27.

In OT times anointing was no mere metaphor. Actual oil was used often enough.<sup>8</sup> Nor was it used in any small measure. In Aaron's installation, it is said to have run upon the head, down the beard, and down on the edge of

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5 That real spiritual power is seen as in some way conveyed by the laying on of hands is confirmed by its use in miraculous healings, as in Matt. 9:18; Mk 5:23; 16:18.

6 Exod. 28:41; 30:30; 40:11; Lev. 6:20; 7:36; 8:12; 16:32; Num. 3:3; 35:25; 1 Chron. 29:22.

7 Judg. 9:8, 15; 1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 16:3, 12, 13; 2 Sam. 2:4, 7; 3:39; 5:3, 17; 19:15; 1 Kings 1:39, 45; 19:16; 2 Kings 9:3, 6, 12; 11:12; 23:30; 1 Chron. 11:3; 14:8; 29:22; 2 Chron. 22:7; 23:11; Ps. 45:7; 89:20.

8 Exod. 29:5–7; Lev. 8:10–12, 30; 10:7; 21:10, 12; 1 Sam. 16:13; Ps. 89:20.

his garments (Ps. 133:2). In the NT, oil was apparently never used in ceremonies of installation into Christian office,<sup>9</sup> perhaps because the sanctuary on earth was no longer in focus.<sup>10</sup> The language does not therefore directly inform any ordination ceremony. However, it does stress the divine call behind installation to office or service. Where ceremony does occur, it is at the beginning of office.

Since priesthood and kingship were hereditary, the act of anointing was ever and always an act of initial grace, never a reward or recognition for work well done.

### *Causing the Appointee to Stand*

The OT and NT alike speak of appointees to various offices being “made to stand.” Moses had Joshua literally stand before the people when he appointed him as his successor. Where an appointee to office can stand, it may remain to this day a rich symbol of readiness to serve.

The *Hiph’il* of the verb ‘md (“stand”) is frequently used with reference to the appointment of priests and Levites to office. Priests are made to stand. In two passages, the Hebrew word translated in the KJV as “ordain” is a *Hiph’il* of ‘md, or “stand,” conveying the idea of causing people to stand.<sup>11</sup> The Greek verb *kathistēmi* is a compound variation of the verb *histēmi*, “stand,” and is used in Hebrews for the appointment of the high priest (Heb. 5:1; 8:3). Standing is the appropriate posture for a priest or temple assistant, ready to serve at a moment’s notice, although the characteristic posture of Jesus as high priest is sitting, his atoning work finished in a way an earthly high priest’s work could never be. Of course, his followers serving him on earth today have a work before them that is not yet finished (Heb. 1:3, 13; 10:12).

The *Hiph’il* of ‘md is also used of appointment of Joshua as Moses’ successor (Num. 17:22), of appointment to the office of king (1 Chron. 17:14),

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9 Although the NT contains instruction for elders to use it during prayers for the sick (James 5:14), but this act may have had as much to do with the perceived curative properties of the oil as with any supposed special spiritual significance.

10 Indeed even in OT times, Psalm 133 suggests that unity was well on the way to operating as a functional substitute for the oil in times when the temple was not operational. See Elie Assis, “Family and Community as Substitutes for the Temple after Its Destruction: New Readings in Psalm 127 and 133,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85 (2009): 55–62.

11 E.g., in 1 Kings 12:32; 1 Chron. 6:31; 9:22; 15:16, 17; 2 Chron. 8:14; 11:5; 19:8; 23:19; 29:25; 31:2; 35:2; Ezra 3:8; Neh. 13:10, 30.

of advancement in princely office (2 Chron. 11:22), of appointment as a eunuch to serve a queen (Esther 4:5), of the installation of judges (2 Chron. 19:5), of the raising of an army (Dan. 11:11, 13), and of appointment to serve under a military commander (2 Chron. 25:5).

The verb *kathistēmi* is used with reference to the appointment of the faithful and wise servant over his master's household, who is subsequently given authority over all the master's goods (Matt. 24:45, 47; Lk 12:42, 44). Appointment to wider responsibility is likewise in focus in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:21, 23. It is used with reference to the appointment of an arbitrator or judge with authority over another (Lk 12:14; Acts 7:27, 35) and with reference to the appointment of the first Christian deacons (Acts 6:3). It is likewise used of Pharaoh's appointing Joseph over his household and over Egypt (Acts 7:10), of Titus' appointment of elders in Crete, and of God giving human beings authority over creation (Heb. 2:7).

Obviously the idea of "causing to stand" applies to a wide variety of roles, not all of them strictly priestly. In Numbers 17:22 it is no dead metaphor. Moses apparently literally stands Joshua up before the people. Where an appointee to office can stand, it remains an appropriate symbol in any appointment ceremony of the readiness of the appointee to serve.

### ***The Filling of the Hand***

The "filling" of the hand is an expression often used in the OT to refer to the consecration of priests. It may have been a dead metaphor. However, placing emblems of grace in the hand of a person being installed to Christian office may be a rich symbol indeed.

When priests are symbolically installed in office, the Hebrew often speaks of the "filling" [*ml'*] of the hand of the priest. The idea appears to be that of provision for the priest to do his work. The special dress and anointing of priests are described in Exodus 29:5-9 and the statement is made, "And thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons," as rendered in the King James Version, or more literally, "You will fill the hand of Aaron and the hand of his sons" (verse 9).<sup>12</sup>

The expression may have been a dead metaphor. However, Christian ceremonies installing people to office may be significantly enriched by the placing of gifts of grace in the hand of the candidate, such as the Word of Scripture.

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12 So also the Hebrew behind the verb "consecrate" is literally "fill the hand" in Exod. 28:41; 29:33; Lev. 8:33; 16:32; Judg. 17:5, 12; 1 Kings 13:33; and 1 Chron. 29:5. Cf. the passive "was consecrated" in Lev. 21:10.

### *The Stretching of the Hand*

The “stretching of the hand” is closely related to the “laying on of the hand(s).” It signifies acting in power, delegation of authority, and commitment into divine care, and sometimes involves roles rather than offices. The stretching forth of a hand by community members in installation ceremonies would be a ceremonial practice reflecting the element of community support implicit in 2 Corinthians 8:19.

The stretching out of the hand is a Hebrew idiom, indicating acting in power, whether to deliver (e.g., Exod. 3:20) and/or to destroy.<sup>13</sup> It particularly involves commissioning a prophet to speak: “Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, I have put my words in your mouth” (Jer. 1:9). The Greek verb for stretching the hand, *cheirotoneō*, is twice used in the NT to describe appointment to offices and roles that emphasize delegated authority to act:

Paul and Barnabas *appointed* elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust (Acts 14:23; emphasis added).

What is more, he [Titus] was *chosen* by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help (2 Cor. 8:19; emphasis added).

Commitment into the care of God as a related symbolism of the word is indicated in Acts 14:23. However the focus is sometimes on a specified role rather than on an ecclesiastical office, as indicated in 2 Corinthians 8:19.

As my colleague Wendy Jackson has pointed out to me, the question must be asked, was the stretching out of the hand in these instances a dead metaphor? In other words, does *cheirotoneō* simply denote (s)election without any particular accompanying ceremony of the hand? Perhaps. Nevertheless, services of installation might be enriched by members of the congregation lifting up a hand to show support for the person being installed to an office or role and to affirm that person acts on the community’s behalf.

### **General Terminology of Installation**

We now turn to other Hebrew and Greek verbs used to denote installation to office, verbs that do not appear to denote ceremony at all, but broaden our understanding of what appointment involves. This section examines in turn the language of appointment to office as gift, the language of placement in office, the language of sanctification or separation, and the language of appointment as “making.”

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<sup>13</sup> Exod. 9:15; 1 Sam. 24:6, 10; 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Sam. 1:14; 18:12; Job 1:11-12; 2:5; 30:24; Ps. 55:20; 138:7; Dan. 11:42.



### *The Language of Appointment as Gift*

Those who are appointed to an office or task not only receive gifts of enablement, they are themselves also a gift to God's people. The Hebrew verb *ntn* is usually translated as "give" in English. However, it can also refer to the setting of objects in space, e.g., of the greater and lesser lights in the firmament on the fourth day (Gen. 1:17) or of the rainbow in the cloud (Gen. 9:13). By extension, it can refer to the metaphoric placement of people in particular roles or offices, such as with the appointment of (false) priests mentioned in 2 Kings 23:12 and as with the appointment of Jeremiah as prophet in Jeremiah 1:5. The gift aspect of the verb may not apply in every instance, but particularly comes to the fore in the notion of Yahweh's giving the Levites to help the priests (Num. 8:19; 18:6; cf. 1 Chron. 6:48) and of David's appointment of temple servants to the same end (Ezra 8:20; cf. Jer. 29:26; Ezek. 44:14). This is in line with the NT concept of particular roles and offices as gifts to the Church bestowed in consequence of her Lord's exaltation (Eph. 4:7–13). The verb is especially applied to the appointment of kings,<sup>14</sup> including the elevation of the king as the divine firstborn (Ps. 89:27). It is used to speak of the appointment of the prince of Tyre as covering cherub (Ezek. 28:14), the stationing of garrisons (2 Chron. 17:2), and the appointment of deliverers in time of oppression (Neh. 9:27).

The use of *ntn* in the context of appointment to ecclesiastical office emphasizes the wide range of offices and roles that may be involved, and celebrates the ways in which those fulfilling these offices and roles are a divine gift to the community.

### *The Language of Placement in Office*

The Hebrew verb *šym* ("place") denotes action under authority. On the other hand, the use of the Greek verb *tithēmi* (also "place") emphasizes that divine calling comes from God and denotes the diversity of the gifts that God has ordained in the Church.

The Hebrew verb *šym* ("place") is used usually with reference to setting someone above something or someone else, i.e., placing that person in a position of authority over the other. Pharaoh makes Joseph ruler of his household (Ps. 105:21), and suggests that Joseph place one of his family over the royal livestock (Gen. 47:6). A Hebrew slave asks who has made Moses ruler and judge over them (Exod. 2:14). Pharaoh sets taskmasters over the Israelites (Exod. 1:11; 5:14), and Jethro urges Moses to set officials over the people to settle their disputes (Exod. 18:21). Military commanders are likewise set over their troops (1 Sam. 8:11; 18:5; 22:7; 2 Sam. 18:1). Yahweh

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14 Deut. 17:15; 1 Sam. 12:13; 1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chron. 9:8; Neh. 13:26.

promises to set David's hand "over the sea," i.e., in a position of authority (Ps. 89:25). Leaders are set over individual tribes (Deut. 1:13), judges are set for the nation (1 Sam. 8:11; 2 Sam. 15:4), and leaders, princes, and kings are set over people (1 Kings 10:9), sometimes at the insistence of the people themselves (Deut. 17:14, 15; Judg. 11:11; 1 Sam. 10:19). The Chaldeans are set in place by God to bring judgment upon Judah (Hab. 1:12). Yahweh's setting of Zerubbabel as a signet ring is synonymous with according him great authority (Hag. 2:23). Mordecai is set over Haman's household (Esther 8:2). When Yahweh sets the lowly on high, he gives them high position (Job 5:11). The verb *šym* is used once for appointment to a position of leadership in Levitical office (2 Chron. 26:10). The use of *šym* to denote installation in an office or role tends to underscore the fact that sometimes offices and roles require the exercise of leadership one over another.

The Greek verb *tithēmi* conveys the idea of putting a certain thing in place, much like the Hebrew verb *šym*. Like *šym*, it is sometimes used to denote appointment to specific roles and offices. Jesus' choosing of his disciples, described in John 15:16, doesn't relate to the ordination of a particular group of believers, but to a role that Christ in his sovereignty applies to all. Paul's appointment as preacher, apostle, and teacher is certainly not from men, though acknowledged by others reputed to be apostles (Gal. 1:11–2:21).

The verb *tithēmi* is used with reference to the appointment of Israel as a light to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47). Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as making the Ephesian elders overseers of the flock. However, the fact that the Holy Spirit is the grammatical subject suggests he does not primarily have a human ceremony in mind. Abraham is spoken of as having been appointed or put in place as the father of many nations, again a distinctly divine act (Rom. 4:17). God sets different members of the body and spiritual gifts in place, as pleases him (1 Cor. 12:18, 28). Paul speaks of God placing him into ministry or service (1 Tim. 1:12). Paul is placed as a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher to the Gentiles (1 Tim. 2:7). Christ is appointed as heir of all things (Heb. 1:2).

### *The Language of Sanctification*

The use of *qdš* in the OT and the use of *hagiazō* in the NT show how God appoints every one of his people to a variety of different offices and roles. The installation comes at the commencement of the role, if not beforehand. Therefore it is not a reward for a job well done. It just is!

Intensive forms of the Hebrew verb *qdš*, "separating as holy," are often used to denote the appointment of people to special roles. Examples of this

use with the *Pi'el* stem include Moses' "sanctification" or preparation of Israel as they anticipate Yahweh's self-revelation in giving the Decalogue from Sinai,<sup>15</sup> the dedication of the firstborn of humans and animals to Yahweh (Exod. 13:1), and the appointment of priests.<sup>16</sup> However, it is also used with reference to enemies appointed to destroy the king of Judah (Jer. 22:7). The *Hiph'il* stem of *qdš* is used to depict the appointment of Jeremiah as a prophet even before his birth (Jer. 1:5), and the selection of future generations of firstborn for dedication to Yahweh (Num. 3:13; 8:17). Indeed, the very reason for the use of the *Hiph'il* rather than the *Pi'el* stem may be to indicate that the office or role assigned is in process, rather than being immediately brought into effect.<sup>17</sup>

Like the Hebrew word *qdš*, the Greek word *hagiazō* expresses the idea of separation for a purpose. Jesus speaks of himself as being set apart and sent into the world (Jn 10:36) and of his disciples as being set apart through God's Word (Jn 17:17). Paul declares the Gentiles who receive Christ to have been set apart (Rom. 15:16), as he does the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:2) and the Church as a whole as Christ's bride (Eph. 5:26).

### *Appointment as a "Making"*

The language of Christ "making" the Twelve to be with him and to be sent forth by him (Mk 3:14) is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts, not from some later time.

In the King James Version the verb *poieō* is once translated as "ordain" with reference to human beings: "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach" (Mk 3:14).

The verb *poieō* is generally translated as "do" or "make." It occasionally has the sense of assigning someone a new role or function, as here in Mark 3:14, where the idea seems to be that Jesus designated a group of twelve, corresponding to the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel, with a specific function in mind, i.e., preaching. Jesus promises to make Peter and Andrew "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19; Mk 1:17). The Jews use *poieō* to describe Jesus making himself God (Jn 10:33; 19:7), and John speaks of the one who does not believe God as making him a liar (1 Jn 5:10).

<sup>15</sup> Exod. 19:10; cf. Exod. 31:13; Lev. 20:8, 15; Josh. 7:13; Ezek. 20:12; 37:2.

<sup>16</sup> Exod. 25:41; 28:3; 29:1, 44; 30:30; 40:13; Lev. 21:8; 1 Sam. 7:1.

<sup>17</sup> On the fine but important distinction between the use of the *Pi'el* stem as factitive and the use of the *Hiph'il* stem as causative, see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §27.1c, 27.2c.

In Mark 3:14 this "ordination" is placed at the beginning of the disciples' ministry. The use of the verb *poieō* is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts.

## Conclusions

In the Bible the laying on of the hand(s) is an actual physical act accompanying the installation to an office or task and denotes the delegation of authority and the granting of blessing. It comes at the beginning of the office or task, not long afterwards as a reward for work done. Moses laid hands upon Joshua, thus designating him as his successor. The laying on of the hand upon elders and deacons in the NT is an extension of the laying on of the hand upon all new believers, so the laying on of the hand cannot be confined to one subset of Christians. No biblical distinction can be made between laying on of the hand in commissioning and laying on of the hand in ordination.

Priests, kings, prophets, and promulgators of good news were anointed to office in the OT. The physical act of anointing to office is not present in the NT. Anointing denotes the primacy and initiative of grace and divine call in appointment.

In the Bible, installation to office is often spoken of as requiring the appointee to stand. In the case of Moses' appointment of Joshua, Moses physically stood Joshua in front of Israel. It is an act that appropriately symbolizing readiness and willingness to serve.

The consecration of OT priests is often described in terms of filling the hand, presumably for service. There is no evidence it was physically a part of priestly installation ceremonies, although a physical filling of the hand with emblems of grace would be an enriching addition to installation ceremonies.

The use of gift language in the context of appointment to ecclesiastical office emphasizes the wide range of offices and roles that may be involved, and celebrates the way that those fulfilling these offices and roles are a divine gift to the community.

The stretching out of the hand may or may not have been a physical act of appointment in the OT and NT. However, it can appropriately be included in contemporary ceremonies of appointment as a way of indicating the appointee acts on behalf of the community.

The Hebrew language of placement denotes action under authority. The Greek language of placement emphasizes that divine calling comes from God. It denotes the diversity of the gifts that God has ordained in the Church.

The OT and NT language of sanctification or separation shows how God calls every one of his people to a variety of different offices and roles. The installation comes at the commencement of the role, if not beforehand. Therefore it is not a reward for a job well done. It just is!

The language of Christ “making” the Twelve to be with him and to be sent forth by him (Mk 3:14) is suggestive of appointment to office from the beginning of the time a ministry starts, not from some later time.

In summary, the laying on of the hand upon an appointee to ecclesiastical office and having the candidate stand before the congregation have clear biblical precedent. A case for the congregation to stretch forth the hand toward the appointee and for the appointee’s hand to be filled with emblems of grace can be made. However, there is no biblical basis for a distinction between ordination and commissioning, and certainly no basis for separating ceremonies of instalment from the actual commencement of a ministry or role. Language of gift, placement, separation, and “making” can be used for the enrichment of such occasions.